

Suggested Remarks
Kevin Donahue
Center for Disaster Preparedness – USAID/OFDA Grant
Recipient
Turn-over Ceremony
January 8, 2007, 0930H
Municipal Hall, Dagupan City

- Acknowledgements

“Magandang umaga sa inyong lahat”

On behalf of the United States Government and the American people, I am pleased to join you today to be part of the turn-over of life-saving materials from the Center for Disaster Preparedness (CDP) to the eight communities participating in the CDP’s flood preparations program. The goal of this program is to improve the standards of disaster preparedness and response in and around Dagupan City and this ceremony is a recognition of the commitment to this goal by everyone present here today.

The recent deadly typhoons in the Bicol Region and other parts of the Philippines bring home the critical importance of making as many preparations as possible in advance of a natural disaster to help save lives

and alleviate the suffering of survivors. That is the important work that the CDP and your local communities are engaged in here in Dagupan City.

Unfortunately, natural disasters are becoming more and more familiar. All of our countries, including my own home country, the United States, are already vulnerable to natural disasters. And, disasters are likely to become more frequent – and the impact perhaps more severe – with global trends including increasing population density and global warming. It is more imperative than ever to be well prepared.

When Hurricane Katrina ravaged the Gulf Coast of the United States in September 2005, the Philippines was among the first countries to offer support and assistance to the victims. That is one reason why the American people are honored to be able to help ameliorate the suffering of the survivors of recent local natural disasters such as Milenyo and Reming, and the deadly Guinsaugon, Leyte landslides of February 2006. We have provided both relief goods and livelihood assistance to affected families. It is a privilege to be here today to work with our Filipino partners as we make preparations in advance of future natural disasters so that the number of victims will be reduced as will the suffering of those affected.

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is proud to play a part in supporting this important program, principally through our Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance's (OFDA) grant to the CDP. This is an important pilot project in community-based flood mitigation that can serve as a model for cities and towns in the Philippines and across Asia. The USAID Mission in the Philippines has kept the importance of disaster preparedness very much on our radar screens. The Philippines, after all, is one of the most natural disaster prone countries in the world. While international assistance is beneficial in the aftermath of a natural disaster, no country can rely solely on international help. It is usually local people and local authorities who have the ability to save the most lives and ease the suffering of the majority of people affected. That is why building local skills and making advance preparations is so critically important.

I congratulate the CDP for taking this comprehensive, holistic approach to the complex challenges that seasonal flooding in Dagupan City present. I would also like to commend all of the hardworking members of the Municipal City Disaster Coordinating Council for your commitment and

dedication to saving lives and protecting property and livelihoods through responsible preparations.

Maraming salamat at Manigong Bagong Taon.